

IN THE CLAIMS:

This set of claims is a clean set of pending claims 1-4 and 6-12, consolidating any previous versions of pending claims into this single clean version, with changes made in this response being shown in the Appendix.

2-1-01
1. (Amended three times) A process for monitoring the consumptions of a plurality of franking machines through a public communication network, at least one of the franking machines being electrically isolated from the public communications network and at least one of the franking machines being in communication with the public communications network, the process comprising the steps of:

first establishing a link with a management server through the public communications network, in accordance with a protocol of communication, via at least one supervision terminal from which the isolated franking machine is independent; and

subsequently proceeding with an exchange of data between the supervision terminal and the management server during which a user (1) acquires at the supervision terminal a current invoicing index indicative of the isolated franking machine and (2) receives a code of authorization to frank in order to validate the subsequent frankings of the isolated franking machine, wherein said step of data exchange further comprises:

displaying, at the supervision terminal (1) a list of the plurality of franking machines, and (2) for each one of the plurality of franking machines, a last invoicing index validated by the management server.

2. (Amended two times) The process of claim 1, wherein the protocol of communication used for establishing a link with the management server is a Videotex protocol, such as teletel protocol.

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3. (Amended) The process of claim 1, wherein the protocol of communication used for establishing a link with the management server is a protocol of TCP/IP type.

4. The process of claim 1, wherein said step of data exchange further comprises: the user entering into the supervision terminal an identifier including at least one of a password and a personal identification number.

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6. (Amended two times) The process of claim 1, wherein said step of data exchange further comprises displaying, at the supervision terminal, one of a selectable plurality of tables and statistics in graph form relating to a list of printing heads of the plurality of franking machines.

7. (Amended) The process of claim 1, wherein the code of authorization to frank comprises information indicative of one of (1) an authorized maximum amount of credit, (2) an authorized maximum amount of consumption, and (3) a period of franking.

8. (Amended) The process of claim 1, wherein the code of authorization to frank is obtained by calculation from one of the current invoicing index and a serial number of a printing head.

9. (Amended) The process of claim 1, wherein the code of authorization to frank is obtained by calculation from a current date.

10. (Amended) The process of claim 1, wherein the code of authorization to frank is obtained by calculation from information indicative of one of (1) a maximum amount of credit, (2) a maximum amount of authorized consumption, and (3) an authorized period of franking.

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11. (Amended) The process of claim 1, wherein the protocol of communication used for establishing a link with the management server is a protocol of telephonic communication of a vocal synthesis type.

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12. (Amended two times) A process for monitoring the consumptions of a plurality of franking machines through a public communication network, the process comprising the steps of:

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first establishing a link with a management server through the public communications network, via a supervision terminal, in accordance with a protocol of communication, the plurality of franking machines all being independent of the supervision terminal; and
subsequently proceeding with an exchange of data between the supervision terminal and the management server during which a user (1) inputs at the supervision terminal an identifier including at least one of a password and a personal identification number, and (2) receives from a display of the supervision terminal statistical data indicative of franking performed by said plurality of franking machines.
